Australian Government

Refugee Review Tribunal

1. **Is it easier to change a photograph on an Israeli passport than on a passport from another country?**

   News articles have reported that Israeli passports are considered to be one of the easiest passports to forge. It would thus be possible to change photographs on an Israeli passport. There are reports that Iranians have used forged Israeli passports to enter a number of countries.

   A February 2006 article on the Israel-based news website, ynet news.com, states that Israeli passports were amongst the easiest passports to forge. It noted that many of the passports are sold by Israeli backpackers looking for "easy money". These passports can be purchased in Asia, particularly in Thailand for between $US500 and $US2,000. The article reported instances of Iranians using fake Israeli passports to enter Macau and Japan.[1]

   According to an earlier 2003 Israel TV Channel 1 news article, Israeli police officials have stated that "the Israeli passport is the easiest to forge in the world". The article noted that Israelis in Asia sell passports to "Iranian crime gangs".[2]

   A December 2009 *Bangkok Post* indicates that the practice of forging Israeli passports continues. It reported that stolen passports from many countries, including Israel, are trafficked by passport forgery gangs in Thailand. The passports are forged by changing the identities and cost, on average, $US10,000 – higher for international criminals.[3]

   The ynet news.com news article also indicated the ease a photograph on an Israeli passport could be changed:

   > Another Iranian who was caught in Japan with a fake Israeli passport was caught when the name in his passport belonged to a female. The Iranian replaced the picture, but didn't bother changing the name.[4]

   Other Iranians were said to have used forged Israeli passports for onward travel to developed countries. Dominic Waghorn, Middle East correspondent for Sky News[5], in a March 2009 blog reported that the *Maariv* newspaper[6] claimed that three Iranians were

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[1] Eichner, Itamar 2006, 'Fake passports big hit with Iranians, Turks', ynet news.com website, 22 February http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3219704,00.html – Accessed 8 June 2010 – Attachment 1.

[2] 'Israeli tourists in Asia selling "dozens" of passports to Iranian gangs' 2003, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, source: Israel TV Channel 1, 15 December – Attachment 2.

[3] 'Six arrested in passport scam, terror link seen' 2009, *Bangkok Post*, 12 December http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/crimes/29103/six-arrested-in-passport-scam-terror-link-seen - Accessed 8 June 2010 – Attachment 3.

[4] Eichner, Itamar 2006, 'Fake passports big hit with Iranians, Turks', ynet news.com website, 22 February http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3219704,00.html – Accessed 8 June 2010 – Attachment 1.

[5] Waghorn, Dominic (undated), 'Dominic Waghorn's page', Sky News website http://blogs.news.sky.com/profile/Dominic%20Waghorn – Accessed 9 June 2010 – Attachment 4.

[6] Maariv is an Israeli Hebrew language newspaper. 'Israel: Dailies' 2008, *The Europa World Yearbook 2008*, Vol. 1, p.2406 – Attachment 5.

caught entering the Seychelles using stolen Israeli passports. Waghorn blogged that *Maariv* stated the Iranians were not returned to Israel but to Kenya from where they had flown. The Israeli government believed that the Iranians were entering the Seychelles to travel onwards to "a first world destination".[7]

Attachments

1. Eichner, Itamar 2006, 'Fake passports big hit with Iranians, Turks', ynet news.com website, 22 February http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3219704,00.html – Accessed 8 June 2010.

2. 'Israeli tourists in Asia selling "dozens" of passports to Iranian gangs' 2003, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, source: Israel TV Channel 1, 15 December. (FACTIVA)

3. 'Six arrested in passport scam, terror link seen' 2009, *Bangkok Post*, 12 December http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/crimes/29103/six-arrested-in-passport-scam-terror-link-seen - Accessed 8 June 2010.

4. Waghorn, Dominic (undated), 'Dominic Waghorn's page', Sky News website http://blogs.news.sky.com/profile/Dominic%20Waghorn – Accessed 9 June 2010.

5. 'Israel: Dailies' 2008, *The Europa World Yearbook 2008*, Vol. 1, p.2406. (MRT-RRT Library)

6. Waghorn, Dominic 2010, 'Forged Passports: Is It Catching On?', Sky News website, 9 March http://blogs.news.sky.com/middleeastblog/Post:2bd5d178-3c75-43bf-9485-a03093e8f72f – Accessed 9 June 2010.

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[7] Waghorn, Dominic 2010, 'Forged Passports: Is It Catching On?', Sky News website, 9 March http://blogs.news.sky.com/middleeastblog/Post:2bd5d178-3c75-43bf-9485-a03093e8f72f – Accessed 9 June 2010 – Attachment 6.